

# Friday the 13th: somewhere between religion and superstition

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## *The Washington Post:*

Of all the traditional Western superstitions, Friday the 13th has the strongest connection to religion and the Christian faith in particular.

Over the years, there have been a variety of theories of the origin the Friday the 13th superstition, but like many explanations of folk practices and beliefs, these accounts often have the flavor of post-hoc, just-so stories with little to back them up. Some commentators point to Norse mythology and the killing of the benevolent god Baldur by the evil Loki, who crashed a gathering of twelve gods in Valhalla to form an unlucky grouping of thirteen. Others point to the Wiccan religion and the practice of witches gathering in groups of thirteen on the sabbath. But in his book *13: The Story of The World's Most Popular Superstition*, Nathaniel Lachenmeyer finds the earliest references to the thirteen superstition in 17th Century England. At that time, the belief took the form of the traditional taboo against seating thirteen people at a table—a direct reference to the Last Supper, the historic assemblage of thirteen men for the eucharistic seder at the heart of one religion's emergence from another. According to Lachenmeyer, this first thirteen-related superstition was—from the 17th through 19th Centuries—widely understood to be inspired by the Last Supper, and only later, in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries did Friday become associated with the fear of the number thirteen.

Read the whole story: [\*The Washington Post\*](#)